

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claim 1 without prejudice, add claim 21, and amend claims 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, and 10-20, all as indicated below in the detailed listing of claims:

Claim 1 (canceled).

Claim 2 (currently amended). ~~[[The]]~~A sticker handling apparatus for use in lumber stacking with a sticker in-feed conveyor and a fork arm defining an upper surface, with a sticker tray connected to the fork arm of claim 1, wherein an upper surface is defined on the fork arm, the apparatus further comprising:

a sticker support bracket configured to support at least a portion of a sticker;

an actuating assembly operatively connected to the sticker support bracket and comprising a first actuator configured to move the sticker support bracket in a first dimension, and a second actuator configured to move the sticker support bracket in a second dimension, wherein the first actuator and the second actuator are independently controllable; and

an overhead rake-off device configured to be moved between a raised clear position and a lowered strip position, and further configured to strip the sticker from the sticker tray when in the lowered strip position and during retraction of the fork arm, the rake-off device comprising a roller operatively mounted thereon, wherein: the roller is configured to contact the upper surface of the fork arm and to roll thereon, thereby supporting at least a portion of the rake-off device, and thereby facilitating vertical alignment and guidance of the rake-off device while stripping the sticker from the sticker tray.

Claim 3 (currently amended). The apparatus of claim ~~[[1]]~~10, and wherein the sticker support bracket has a first end and an opposite distal second end, and wherein the sticker support bracket is substantially resiliently deflectable, whereby the first end is resiliently movable relative to the second end.

1 Claim 4 (original). The apparatus of claim 3, and wherein the sticker support bracket is
2 fabricated from a resiliently flexible material.

3 Claim 5 (original). The apparatus of claim 4, and wherein the sticker support bracket is
4 fabricated from a material comprising urethane.

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6 Claim 6 (currently amended). The apparatus of claim ~~[[3]]~~10, the sticker support bracket
7 comprising:

8 a substantially rigid upper portion configured to contact the sticker, ~~wherein the~~
9 ~~first end of the sticker support bracket is defined on the upper portion;~~

10 a substantially rigid lower portion configured to be connected with the actuating
11 assembly, ~~wherein the second end of the sticker support bracket is defined on the lower~~
12 ~~portion; and,~~

13 a joint member which operatively connects the upper portion to the lower portion,
14 wherein the joint member is resiliently flexible, whereby the ~~first end~~upper portion is
15 resiliently movable relative to the ~~second end~~lower portion.

16 Claim 7 (currently amended). The apparatus of claim ~~[[1]]~~10, and wherein the sticker
17 support bracket has a first end and an opposite distal second end, and wherein a sticker
18 cradle area is defined on the first end between two spaced and substantially parallel
19 horns which longitudinally extend from the first end, and which are separated by a
20 substantially flat sticker support surface.

21 Claim 8 (original). The apparatus of claim 7, and wherein each of the horns is
22 substantially wedge-shaped and is tapered substantially evenly toward respective
23 extreme termini, thereby rendering horns substantially symmetrical to one another.

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1 Claim 9 (currently amended). ~~[[The]]~~A sticker handling apparatus of claim 1, the
2 actuating assembly further for use in lumber stacking with a sticker in-feed conveyor and
3 a fork arm with a sticker tray connected thereto, the apparatus comprising:

4 a sticker support bracket configured to support at least a portion of a sticker;

5 an actuating assembly operatively connected to the sticker support bracket and
6 comprising a first actuator configured to move the sticker support bracket in a first
7 dimension, and a second actuator configured to move the sticker support bracket in a
8 second dimension, wherein the first actuator and the second actuator are independently
9 controllable; and

10 a substantially stationary base, wherein:

11 the first actuator is operatively connected to the base and supported
12 thereby;

13 the first actuator, during operation thereof, remains substantially stationary
14 relative to the base;

15 the second actuator is operatively connected between the first actuator
16 and the sticker support bracket;

17 operation of the first actuator causes movement of the second actuator
18 and the sticker support bracket relative to the base in the first dimension; and,

19 operation of the second actuator causes movement of the sticker support
20 bracket relative to the base in the second dimension.

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1 Claim 10 (currently amended). [[The]]A sticker handling apparatus of claim 1, and for
2 use in lumber stacking with a sticker in-feed conveyor and a fork arm with a sticker tray
3 connected thereto, the apparatus comprising:

4 a sticker support bracket configured to support at least a portion of a sticker;
5 an actuating assembly operatively connected to the sticker support bracket and
6 comprising a first actuator configured to move the sticker support bracket in a first
7 dimension, and a second actuator configured to move the sticker support bracket in a
8 second dimension, wherein:

9 the first actuator and the second actuator are independently controllable;
10 and
11 selective actuation of at least one of the first actuator and the second
12 actuator causes the sticker support bracket to lift the sticker from the sticker in-
13 feed conveyor, and to place the sticker on the sticker tray.

14 Claim 11 (currently amended). The apparatus of claim 10, and wherein further selective
15 actuation of at least one of the first actuator [[and]]or the second actuator causes the
16 sticker support bracket to remove the sticker from the sticker tray.

17 Claim 12 (currently amended). The apparatus of claim 11, and wherein further selective
18 actuation of at least one of the first actuator [[and]]or the second causes the sticker
19 support bracket to place the sticker back onto the sticker in-feed conveyor.

20 Claim 13 (currently amended). The apparatus of claim 12, and wherein further selective
21 actuation of at least one of the first actuator [[and]]or the second actuator causes the
22 sticker support bracket to place the sticker on the sticker in-feed conveyor.

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1 Claim 14 (currently amended). ~~[[The]]~~A sticker handling apparatus for use in lumber
2 stacking with a sticker in-feed conveyor and a fork arm with a sticker tray connected
3 thereto, the apparatus of claim 1, and further comprising:

4 a substantially stationary base;

5 a support member movably supported by the base, ~~wherein the first actuator is~~
6 ~~configured to move the support member relative to the base in the first dimension;~~

7 a carriage member ~~that is~~ movably supported by the support member and
8 configured to move therewith relative to the base, ~~wherein the second actuator is~~
9 ~~configured to move the carriage member relative to the support member in the second~~
10 ~~dimension, and wherein the~~

11 a sticker support bracket [[is]] supported by the carriage member;

12 a first actuator configured to move the move the support member relative to the
13 base member in a first dimension; and

14 a second actuator configured to move the carriage member relative to the
15 support member in the second dimension, wherein the first actuator and the second
16 actuator are independently controllable.

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1 Claim 15 (currently amended). ~~[[The]]~~A sticker handling apparatus for use in lumber
2 stacking with a sticker in-feed conveyor and a fork arm with a sticker tray connected
3 thereto, the apparatus of claim 1, and further comprising:

4 a substantially stationary base;

5 a carriage member movably supported by the base, ~~wherein the first actuator is~~
6 ~~configured to move the carriage member relative to the base in the first dimension;~~

7 a support member ~~that is~~ movably supported by the carriage member and
8 configured to move therewith relative to the base, ~~wherein the second actuator is~~
9 ~~configured to move the support member relative to the carriage member in the second~~
10 ~~dimension, and wherein the~~

11 a sticker support bracket [[is]] supported by the support member;

12 a first actuator configured to move the move the carriage member relative to the
13 base member in a first dimension; and

14 a second actuator configured to move the support member relative to the
15 carriage member in the second dimension, wherein the first actuator and the second
16 actuator are independently controllable.

17 Claim 16 (currently amended). The apparatus of claim ~~[[1]]~~10, and wherein during
18 movement of the sticker support bracket by the actuating assembly:

19 the sticker support bracket contacts the sticker;

20 the sticker support bracket lifts the sticker from the sticker in-feed conveyor; and,

21 there is no substantial angular movement of the sticker support bracket.

22 Claim 17 (currently amended). The apparatus of claim ~~[[1]]~~10, and wherein during
23 movement of the sticker support bracket by the actuating assembly:

24 the sticker support bracket contacts the sticker;

25 the sticker support bracket lifts the sticker from the sticker in-feed conveyor;

the sticker is released from the sticker support bracket and thereby placed onto
the sticker tray; and,

there is no substantial angular movement of the sticker support bracket.

1 Claim 18 (currently amended). The apparatus of claim [[1]]10, and wherein during
2 movement of the sticker support bracket by the actuating assembly:

3 the sticker support bracket contacts the sticker;

4 the sticker support bracket lifts the sticker from the sticker in-feed conveyor; and,

5 there is no substantial angular movement of the sticker.

6 Claim 19 (currently amended). The apparatus of claim [[1]]10, and wherein during
7 movement of the sticker support bracket by the actuating assembly:

8 the sticker support bracket contacts the sticker;

9 the sticker support bracket lifts the sticker from the sticker in-feed conveyor;

10 the sticker is released from the sticker support bracket and thereby placed onto
11 the sticker tray; and,

12 there is no substantial angular movement of the sticker tray.

13 Claim 20 (currently amended). The apparatus of claim [[1]]10, and wherein:

14 the first dimension is substantially linear; and,

15 the second dimension is substantially linear.

16 Claim 21 (new). The apparatus of claim 10, wherein at least one of the first dimension
17 or the second dimension is substantially nonlinear.

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21 -- End of Amendments to the Claims --
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